

# NRCS **NEWS RELEASE**

United States Department of Agriculture • Natural Resources Conservation Service  
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## **ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY INCENTIVES PROGRAM PROPOSED RULE AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC COMMENT**

LANSING, MI, Feb. 11, 2003—The proposed rule for the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) has been published in the Federal Register and released for public comment.

The 2002 Farm Bill reauthorized and amended the program, which is administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The 2002 Farm Bill authorized \$700 million nationally for EQIP in 2003.

The comment period for the proposed rule allows the public to provide input on EQIP procedures and processes. The public comment period runs for 30 days, from February 10 through March 12, 2003.

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that promotes environmental quality. Local workgroups identify local natural resource concerns, providing the basis for funding decisions made at the state level. Funds will help farmers and ranchers install conservation practices that protect natural resources by reducing soil erosion, improving water quality and protecting other natural resources.

Through the rule making process, NRCS has streamlined program administration and addressed several primary statutory changes in the proposed rule, including:

- Up to 90 percent cost share for limited resource and beginning producers.
- A payment limitation of \$450,000 per qualified individual or entity for all fiscal year 2002-2007 EQIP contracts.
- Providing livestock producers with cost share assistance for waste storage facilities regardless of size, and mandating development and implementation of a comprehensive nutrient management plan.
- Allocating 60 percent of EQIP funds towards livestock related practices.

"In 2002, Michigan farmers enrolled 41,937 acres in EQIP," explains Michigan State Conservationist Ronald Williams. "These farmers are proud of their environmental stewardship and conservation efforts on working lands. They care about their land, and about the people in their communities. They know the conservation treatments applied to their land will improve the quality of the natural resources on their land and benefit their neighbors who enjoy clean water, fresh air and fertile soil."

The proposed EQIP rule can be accessed on the Internet at [www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/rules/eqip030130.html](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/rules/eqip030130.html).

For individuals without Internet access, a copy can be viewed at your local NRCS office located in your county USDA Service Center.

Submit written comments to Mark W. Berkland, Director, Conservation Operation Division, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Room 5241, Washington, DC 20250-2890.

Submit comments via the Internet at [FarmBillRules@usda.gov](mailto:FarmBillRules@usda.gov). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

For more information contact Brian MacMaster, NRCS, 517-324-5256 or Chris Coulon, NRCS, 517-324-5244.

Additional information on EQIP and other conservation programs is on the Web at <http://nrcs.usda.gov/programs/farmbill/2002/products.html>.

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